

CLAIMS

1. A method of scheduling delivery of goods from a logistics company depot (LCD) to a customer having an associated customer account and a customer 5 communications device capable of receiving and transmitting a text message in a system comprising a scheduling computer having scheduling memory and a communications network including a network computer holding the customer account, in which the method comprises the steps of:

10 (a) a delivery request being sent to the scheduling computer;

(b) the scheduling computer generating a text message according to the delivery request;

15 (c) transmitting the text message to the customer communications device requesting confirmation or otherwise of acceptance of proposed delivery at a designated delivery location;

20 (d) receiving a response to the text message from the customer communications device; and

25 (e) updating scheduling information for the LCD according to the response from the customer communications device and sending the scheduling information to the LCD and the customer communications device by a further confirmation text message giving delivery details including earliest estimated delivery time;

characterised in that

30 at a pre-determined initial time, prior to the earliest estimated delivery time, the geographic location of the customer communications device is determined and depending on the distance between the customer communications device and the delivery location an initial delivery text message is sent, cancelling or confirming the delivery.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, in which when the text message is sent, the cancellation or confirmation of the delivery will be carried out at a predetermined future time, unless a text message from the customer communications device is received prior to that time to cause the decision regarding the delivery to be cancelled.  
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3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, in which after the delivery has commenced and at a predetermined time prior to the estimated delivery time, a final delivery text message is sent to the customer communications device.  
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4. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which, for the LCD, there is stored by the scheduling computer, delivery rules established by the LCD detailing the conditions under which the delivery will be handled.  
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5. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which:  
20 when the system includes a customer account associated with a customer and the method requires the payment of money, the customer communications device is sent a text message detailing the debiting or crediting required of the customer account;  
25 the customer communications device sends a text message confirming permission to debit or credit the account with sufficient details to allow the action take place; and  
the LCD carries out the necessary action in respect of the account.  
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6. A method as claimed in claim 5, in which the customer communications device confirms the permission directly to the network computer.  
7. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which when, prior to delivery, the customer communications device sends a text message to the scheduling computer altering the proposed delivery details, the scheduling computer

cancels the delivery and carries out the method as if it were a new delivery.

8. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which on the initial delivery text message being sent cancelling the delivery, the method further comprises the step of the scheduling computer generating a further text message to reschedule the delivery.

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9. A method as claimed in claim 1 in which the geographic location of a logistics company parcel service provider is monitored and depending on the distance between the parcel service provider and the delivery location an initial delivery text message is sent, cancelling or confirming the delivery.

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10. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which on the logistics company determining that they cannot deliver the goods at the agreed time and location, the logistics company sends a reschedule request to the customer via the scheduling computer.

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11. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which on the geographic location of the customer communications device being determined a rescheduling request is sent to at least one of the customer communications device and the LCD.

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12. A method as claimed in claim 9 in which the geographical location of both the customer communication device and the parcel service provider are monitored and on the distance between the customer communication device and the parcel service provider being below a predetermined distance a rescheduling request is sent to at least one of the customer communication device and the parcel service provider.

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13. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the geographic location of the customer communications device is determined using either GPS, the phone cell system or a combination of the GPS and phone cell system dependant on the geographic location of the customer communications device.

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14. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the step of generating a text message according to the delivery request further comprises generating a short message service (SMS) text message.  
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15. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which the step of receiving a response to the text message further comprises receiving an SMS text message from the customer communication device.
- 10 16. A method as claimed in any of claims 1 to 13 in which the step of generating a text message according to the delivery request further comprises generating an MMS message.
- 15 17. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the step of generating a text message according to the delivery request further comprises retrieving LCD scheduling information from the scheduling memory and generating the text message according to the scheduling information.
- 20 18. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which the step of generating a text message according to the delivery request further comprises retrieving LCD profile data containing the suitable and available delivery times available to the LCD to make the delivery from the scheduling memory and generating the text message according to the profile data.
- 25 19. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the scheduling computer sends the scheduling information to the LCD at predetermined intervals.
- 30 20. A method as claimed in any of claims 1 to 18, wherein the LCD requests the information from the scheduling computer when necessary.
21. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the scheduling computer stores a log of unsuccessfully sent text messages and re-sends those text messages after a predetermined time limit.

22. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the scheduling computer on receiving a response from the customer communication device that the proposed delivery times are unsuitable, the scheduling computer generates a further text message arranging the delivery of goods and sends the further text message to the customer communication device.

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23. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which subsequent to receiving the delivery request from the LCD the scheduling computer retrieves the contact details for the customers communication device from the LCD.

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24. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which on receiving a customer communication device contact details, the scheduling computer stores the details in the scheduling memory for future use.

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25. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which before retrieving the contact details from the LCD the scheduling computer attempts to retrieve the contact details from scheduling memory.

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26. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the LCD sends a delivery request to the scheduling computer by sending a barcode to the scheduling computer.

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27. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which on completion of a delivery the LCD accesses the scheduling information and updates the scheduling information.

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28. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the updated scheduling information is sent to the scheduling computer and the scheduling computer updates its scheduling information accordingly.

29. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the LCD updates its profile data in the profiler in accordance with its resources.

30. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which in sending the response to the delivery request text message the customer communication device sends a suggested delivery time and the scheduling computer checks the suggested delivery time for suitability before responding to the customer communications device.

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31. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which on the customer suggesting a further delivery time and that delivery time being suitable, the scheduling computer updates the scheduling data.

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32. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the method further comprises the steps of the scheduling computer generating a sub-optimal schedule for the logistics company depot and transmitting the sub-optimal schedule to the logistics company depot.

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33. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the method further comprises the step of the scheduling computer generating a customised report for the LCD.

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34. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which at a predetermined time the scheduling computer transmits billing data to a customer communications device's network operator.

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35. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which the step of generating a text message according to a delivery request further comprises inserting LC specific graphical or textual content into the message.

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36. A method of scheduling delivery of goods from a remote logistics company depot (LCD) to a customer having an associated customer account and a customer communications device being capable of receiving and transmitting a text message in a system comprising a remote scheduling computer having scheduling memory and a communications network including a network computer holding the customer account, in which the method comprises the

steps of:

5 (a) the customer communications device receiving a text message from the remote scheduling computer requesting confirmation or otherwise of acceptance of proposed delivery at a designated delivery location;

10 (b) transmitting a response to the text message from the customer communications device to the remote scheduling computer;

characterised in that:

15 (c) at a predetermined initial time prior to the earliest estimated delivery time, the customer communications device receives an initial delivery text message cancelling or confirming the delivery, the content of the delivery text message being dependent on the relative position of the customer communications device to the designated delivery location.

20 37. A method as claimed in claim 36 in which a further delivery text message is received at a predetermined future time after the initial text message was received unless a text message is sent from the customer communications device to the remote scheduling computer prior to the predetermined future time to cause the decision regarding the delivery to be cancelled.

25 38. A method as claimed in claim 36 or 37 in which after the delivery has commenced and at a predetermined time prior to the estimated delivery time, a final delivery text message is received by the customer communications device.

30 39. A method as claimed in any of claims 36 to 38 in which the customer communications device receives a text message detailing the debiting or crediting required of a customer account, the customer communications device sends a text message confirming permission to debit or credit the account with sufficient details to allow the action to take place.

40. A method as claimed in claim 39 in which the customer communications device sends the text message confirming permission to the remote LCD.
- 5 41. A method as claimed in claim 39 in which the customer communications device sends the text message confirming permission directly to the network computer.
- 10 42. A method as claimed in any of claims 36 to 41 in which having received a further delivery text message cancelling the delivery, the customer communications device receives a further text message rescheduling delivery.
- 15 43. A method as claimed in any of claims 36 to 42 in which on the distance between the customer communications device and the parcel service provider being below a certain predetermined distance a rescheduling request is received by the customer communications device.
- 20 44. A method of scheduling delivery of goods from a Logistics Company Depot (LCD) to a remote customer having an associated customer account and a customer communications device being capable of receiving and transmitting a text message in a system comprising a remote scheduling computer having scheduling memory and a communications network including a remote network computer holding the customer account in which the method comprises the steps of:
  - 25 (a) transmitting a delivery request from the LCD to the remote scheduling computer;
  - (b) receiving scheduling information from the remote scheduling computer detailing a delivery to be made from the LCD including earliest estimated delivery time for that delivery;
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characterised in that:-

at a predetermined initial time, prior to the earliest estimated delivery time, an initial delivery text message, either cancelling or confirming the delivery dependent on the proximity of the remote customer communications device to the delivery location, is received by the LCD.

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45. A method as claimed in claim 44 in which on receipt of the initial delivery text message cancelling the delivery the LCD sends a further delivery request to the remote scheduling computer.

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46. A method as claimed in claim 44 or 45 in which the method further comprises the initial step of the LCD establishing delivery rules detailing the conditions under which the delivery will be handled.

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47. A method as claimed in any of claims 44 to 46 in which the LCD transmits a payment request to the remote customer communications device and thereafter the LCD receives payment information from the remote customer communications device and carries out the necessary action in respect of the account.

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48. A method as claimed in any of claims 44 to 47 in which on the logistics company depot determining that they cannot deliver the goods at the agreed time and location, the logistics company depot sends a reschedule request to the remote customer communications device via the remote scheduling computer.

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49. A method as claimed in any of claims 44 to 48 in which on the distance between a LCD personnel and the customer communications device being below a predetermined distance, a rescheduling request is received by the LCD personnel

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50. A method as claimed in any of claims 44 to 49 in which the distance between the LCD personnel and the delivery location is monitored and depending on the distance between the delivery location and the LCD personnel at that point in time, a text message is received by the LCD cancelling or confirming

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delivery.

51. A method as claimed in any of claims 44 to 50 in which the method further comprises the step of the LCD receiving a sub-optimal schedule from the remote scheduling computer.
52. A computer program having program instructions for carrying out the method of any of claims 1 to 51.
- 10 53. A computer program as claimed in claim 52 in which the program is embodied on a storage medium.
54. A computer program as claimed in claim 53 in which the program is embodied on a floppy disk.
- 15 55. A computer program as claimed in claim 53 in which the program is embodied on a CD-ROM.
- 20 56. A computer program as claimed in claim 53 in which the program is embodied on a carrier signal.
57. A computer program as claimed in claim 53 in which the program is embodied in an integrated circuit.

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